

**THE 2004 OREGON COMMERCIAL FISHERY
FOR ALBACORE (*THUNNUS ALALUNGA*)**

Prepared by

Marsha Becklund

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Marine Resources Program
2040 SE Marine Science Drive
Newport, OR 97365

December, 2004

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
ALBACORE PORT SAMPLING PROGRAM
Contract No. 04-86
April, 2004 through December, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Albacore is a highly migratory species found in all the world's oceans. Albacore caught off Oregon belong to the North Pacific stock and are generally juvenile fish that have not spawned. During their trans-oceanic migrations, albacore are targeted by fisheries off several nations including the United States, Canada, and Japan at different times of the year. The United States West Coast fishery harvests this stock during summer and fall months.

Albacore has been fished commercially off of Oregon since the mid-1930s when the fishery expanded north from the traditional grounds off southern California. For many years, both bait boats and jig boats fished for albacore off Oregon, but in recent year's predominantly jig-caught (troll-caught) fish have been landed. The current fleet consists primarily of small to medium (20 ft. to 60 ft.) "combination" boats which may fish crab, salmon, or bottom fish at other times of the year, and large freezer boats (most longer than 60 ft.) that travel the north and south Pacific, fishing principally albacore.

Oregon albacore landings have been highly variable through the years, ranging from a low of 27,600 pounds in 1936 to a high of almost 38 million pounds in 1968. In the last decade, landings in Oregon have averaged about 8.0 million pounds.

Sampling of Oregon's albacore fishery is a cooperative effort between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). This report documents the progress of the 2004 fishery off Oregon and the associated sampling activities.

2004 FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

Landings of albacore into Oregon ports began early in late May and continued through early November with the peak occurring in July (Table 1, Figure 1). The preliminary total for 2004 commercial landings is 10,526,936 lbs; this is a 15% increase from 2003 landings of 9,169,244 lbs. (Table 2, Figure 2). This increase was very close to the 1998 landings of 10,600,614 lbs. Oregon landings might have been much higher, but higher ex-vessel value paid by an Ilwacco buyer, attracted some Oregon boats to deliver to the Washington port. Newport received the majority of Oregon deliveries at 46%, followed by Charleston at about 30% and then Astoria with 21%. Nine other ports also received deliveries (Table 3, Figure 3).

Albacore markets remained fairly stable during the 2004 season with fish going to European, Asian, Ecuador (Star Kist), and custom packers and off vessel sales. The ex-vessel price paid for frozen fish going to blast/bled or other alternate markets received from \$0.75 to \$1.50/lb and fresh fish ranged from about \$0.65 to \$1.00/lb. Fishermen selling from their vessels to the public asked for \$1.75/ lb for whole fish and \$3.50/ lb for tuna loins.

In 2004, the number of vessels landing albacore in Oregon was 475, up from 385 vessels in 2003. Landings peaked in July (3,374,144 lbs) followed by August (2,994,838 lbs) and September (2,585,101 lbs).

The estimated number of trips landed into Oregon ports increased from 1,265 in 2003 to 1,528 in 2004. In 2004 the average landing was about 6,889 (7,158 lbs. in 2003) and the average size of albacore delivered to Oregon buyers was again variable, but larger in 2004, ranging from 12 to 30 lbs compared to 12 to 25 lbs in 2003.

During 2004, the recreational albacore fishery off Oregon contributed approximately 276,048 lbs. (17,253 fish at about 16 lbs. average) this was again up from the 2003 catch of 168,218 lbs. (10,195 fish) to total albacore landings. This is a large increase over the estimated landings in 2003 (64% increase). We estimated that the average weight for albacore in Oregon landings was 16.5 pounds. Private boats accounted for 64.5% of the total recreational landings from Garibaldi to Brookings, and charter boats made up the remaining 35.5%.

2004 SAMPLING ACTIVITIES

Sampling was conducted in Astoria, Newport and Charleston. Activities included distribution of new logbooks, collection of completed logbooks, conducting interviews to transcribe logbooks, and measuring fish to obtain length frequencies of catch. Albacore sampling was conducted on a full-time basis in Newport from July 1st through October 31st and part-time in Astoria from July 1st through October 31st and Charleston from July 1st through September 30th. The Oregon Albacore Summary form (attached as Appendix A) presents the data requested in Oregon's contractual agreement for albacore sampling funding. These are:

- a. number of logbooks issued by port
- b. number of logbook collections attempted by port
- c. number of interviews/transcriptions collected by port
- d. number of logbooks collected by port
- e. estimated total landings of albacore by port
- f. estimated number of trips by port
- g. estimated number of vessels by port
- h. estimated landings (lbs,) by gear type
- i. total landings for sampled trips

Also included in the season summary are the number of trips sampled for length-frequency and the number of fish measured.

In 2004, 90 logbooks were distributed to fishermen; increased from the 41 in 2003. Logbook collections attempted (contacts) in 2004 numbered 399, an increase of 45% from 220 in 2003. These contacts resulted in the collection of 188 North Pacific Albacore Voluntary Logbooks and 153 logbook transcriptions, for a total of 341 trips from which data were collected. During 2004, 128 trips were sampled for length frequency, and 7,550 fish were measured, an increase over the 2003 figures of 76 trips and 5,121 fish sampled.

SUMMARY

Oregon's commercial albacore landings in 2004 totaled above 10.5 million lbs., a 14 % increase from 2003 and above the 10 year average. The recreational fishery contributed an estimated 276,048 lbs. in 2004. Albacore sampling was conducted full-time in Newport from July 1st through October 31st and part-time in Astoria from July 1st through October 31st and Charleston from July 1st through September 30th. The tuna fleet reported many sightings of some tropical fish in very warm waters off the Oregon coast ; swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), marlin(*Makaira nigricans*), Yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*), yellowtail (*Seriola dorsalis*), bigeye (*Thunnus obesus*), Pacific Bluefin (*Thunnus Thynnus Orientalis*), and even a few catches of Opah (*Lampris regius*). Many of the tuna fishermen said they did catch Northern Pacific Albacore with no yellow finlets and several tons of Southern Pacific Albacore with yellow finlets , which many of the Oregon port samplers did report and pictures were taken for further research. Finlet coloration was a confusing point on Albacore identification that was referenced in "Peterson Field Guides of Pacific Coast Fishes by Eschmeyer/Herald/Hammann that states on Page274 and Plate 32" that Albacore finlets (are) not yellow".

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the many albacore fishing vessel operators who cooperated by providing logbook or fishing information during our sampling program and to the managers and staff of the fish plants that allow us opportunities to measure fish on their premises. Also, thanks to Bill Barss for his leadership and guidance and to port samplers Sheryl Manley, Gus Gates, Dean Headlee and Jill Smith for their hard work in collecting data and to Carrie White for providing assistance with the recreational data component of the sampling program.

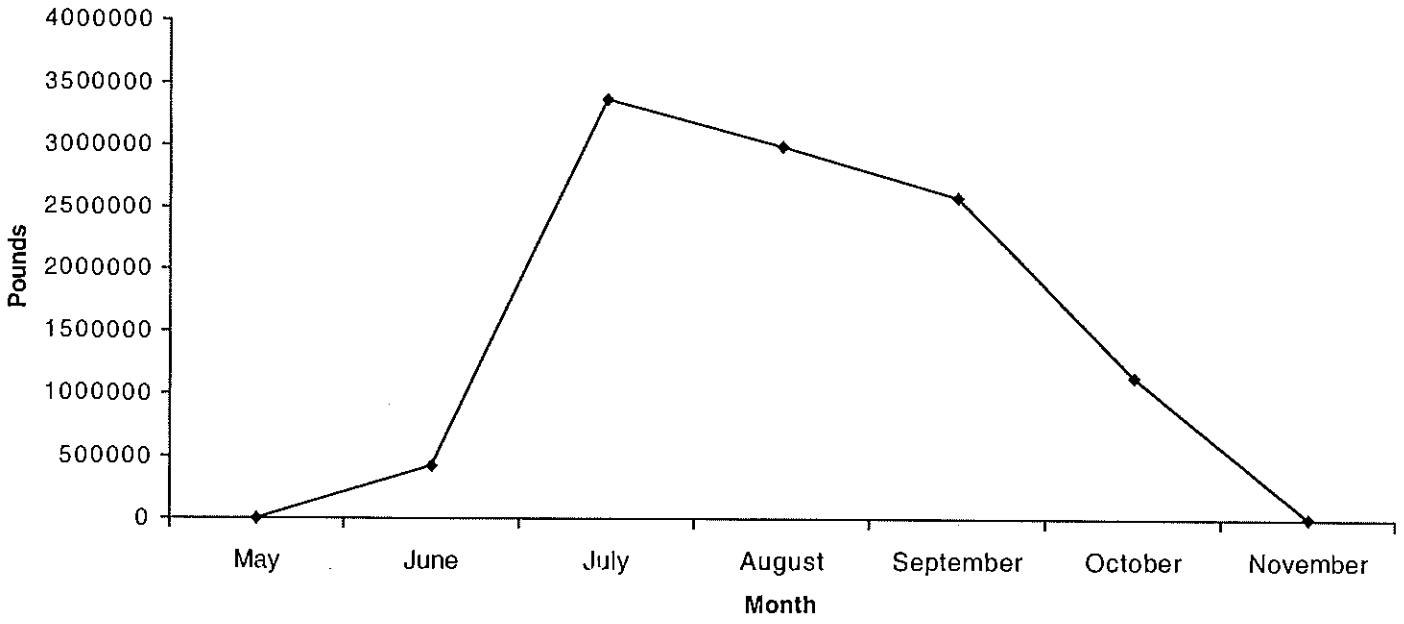


Figure 1. Oregon commercial Albacore landings by month, 2004

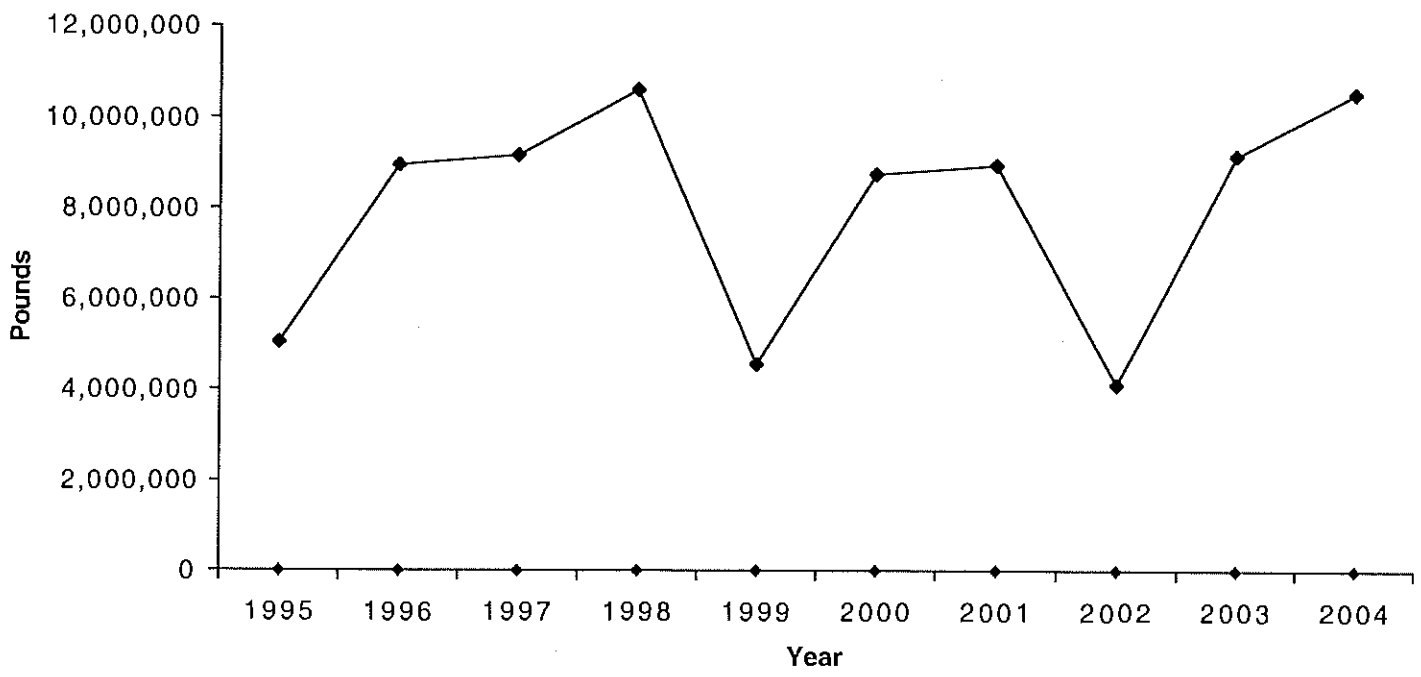


Figure 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1995-2004.

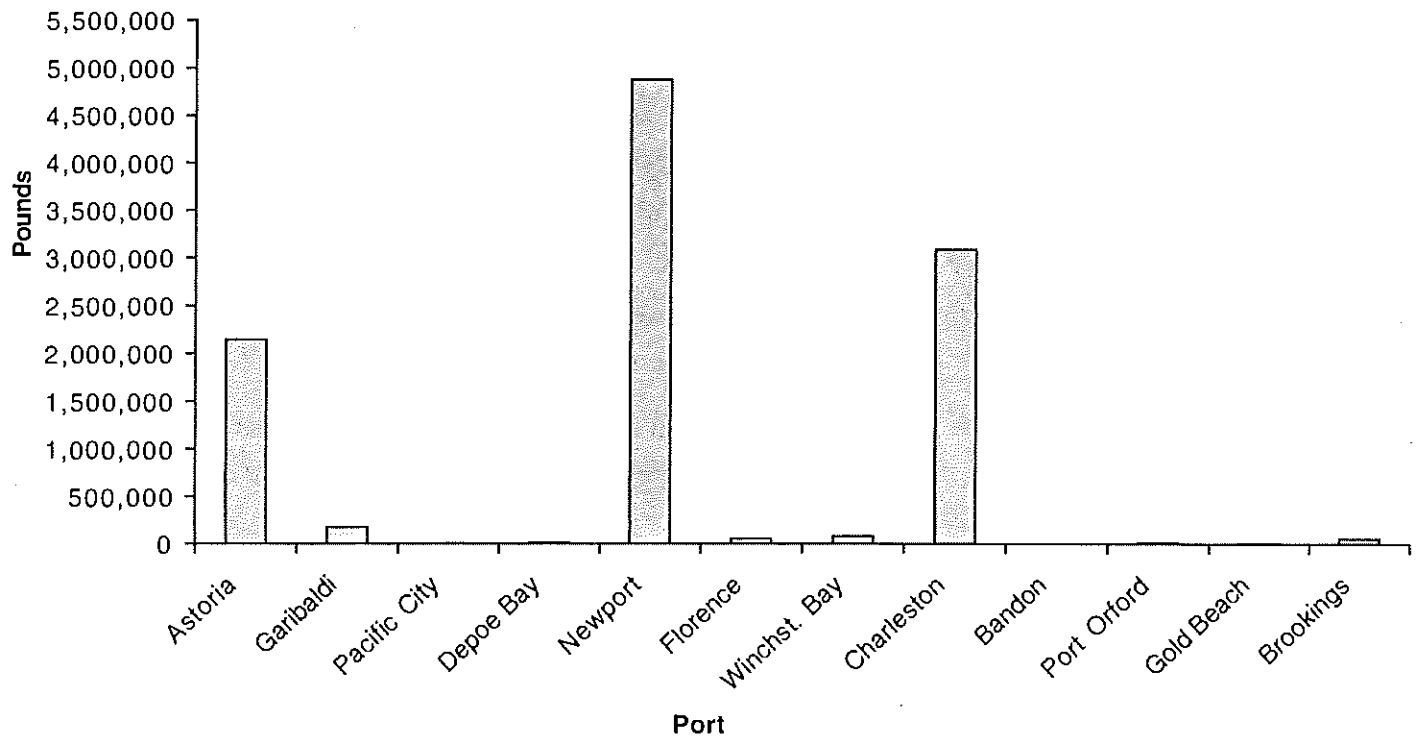


Figure 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port 2004

Table 1. Oregon commercial albacore landings by month, 2004.

Month	Pounds
May	526
June	424,260
July	3,374,144
August	2,994,838
September	2,585,101
October	1,139,170
November	8,897
Total	10,526,936 *

Table 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1995-2004.

Year	Pounds
1995	5,033,810
1996	8,948,355
1997	9,167,738
1998	10,600,614
1999	4,550,635
2000	8,755,659
2001	8,957,549
2002	4,117,472
2003	9,169,244
2004	10,526,936 *

Table 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port, 2004.

Port	Pounds
Astoria	2,146,840
Garibaldi	174,429
Pacific City	4,980
Depoe Bay	12,029
Newport	4,881,928
Florence	51,358
Winchst. Bay	83,448
Charleston	3,097,048
Bandon	2,134
Port Orford	11,541
Gold Beach	4,611
Brookings	56,590
Total	10,526,936 *

* Preliminary